

Legislative Testimony Appropriations Committee
SB 399 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE TOBACCO SETTLEMENT TRUST FUND
AND THE SALE OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS
Testimony of Linda Alderman
March 25, 2022

Esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Linda Alderman and I have lived in West Hartford for over thirty years. I am the Connecticut State Lead Ambassador for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network, and I am testifying in partial support of proposed Senate Bill 399, An Act Concerning the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund and the Sale of Tobacco Products. I thank you for the opportunity.

In Fiscal Year 2022, states will collect \$27 billion from the 1998 tobacco settlement, and nationwide an average of 2.7% of those funds will be spent on tobacco cessation and prevention programs. Connecticut receives \$473 million in tobacco related settlement and tax dollars annually but spends nothing on tobacco control programs. Although the CDC recommends that Connecticut spend \$32 million on tobacco cessation and prevention programs each year, Connecticut has spent zero dollars on those programs since 2016. Connecticut is tied for second in the United States for cigarette taxation, but its lack of spending on tobacco control puts Connecticut in the unfortunate ranking position of dead last in the country, and this should be a tremendous embarrassment to our state. But more than an embarrassment, this egregious lack of funding is having a significant impact on Connecticut residents, and most importantly is detrimentally impacting Connecticut's children: Childhood smoking is up, 20% of high school students now use e-cigarettes, and over \$2 billion is spent on health care costs in Connecticut that are directly attributable to smoking. All of this is happening without Connecticut using one dollar of its tobacco settlement funds for tobacco prevention and cessation programs and while the tobacco industry spends \$55.5 million annually in our state on advertising. We need to do better. Connecticut's children need your protection right now and this can't get put off for another year. I support proposed Senate Bill 399 in effect, but the proposed \$4 million in funding that it would restore to the Tobacco Control Health Fund is not enough; that would be only 12.5% of the \$32 million the CDC has recommended that Connecticut spend on tobacco control. I would ask that the amount in the bill be increased to \$12 million.

My family was directly and detrimentally impacted by my father's inability to quit smoking. My father, who enlisted in the US Army Air Force in 1942 at the age of seventeen to defend our country in World War II, quickly became addicted to cigarettes because the tobacco industry targeted the military to create a generation of cigarette smokers. Although he desperately tried, my father was never able to break his addiction to nicotine and he eventually died of lung cancer after years of suffering. He often told me that his addiction at such a young age led to his inability to quit smoking. I am here today testifying because my father cannot be.

Please take the important step this year to support proposed Senate Bill 399 so that the 1998 tobacco settlement funds are put towards their intended purpose of tobacco education and cessation programs, but please increase the allocated amount from \$4 million to \$12 million.

Thank you for this opportunity and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Sincerely,
Linda Alderman
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